

1.4 CHANGING SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC FOCUS

Environmental changes are one of the many sources of social change:

- Major sources of social change include population growth and composition, culture and technology, the natural environment, and social conflict.
- Environmental problems have a significant impact on people, and solutions to these problems require changes in economic and environmental policies.
- Air pollution, global climate change, water pollution and inadequate sanitation, and hazardous waste are major environmental problems that threaten the planet.
- Environmental changes have enormous implications for changes in societies around the globe.
- Modernization promotes creativity and individual freedom and autonomy. These developments in turn usually mean that a society becomes more tolerant of beliefs and behaviors that it formerly would have disapproved and even condemned.
- Modern societies, then, generally feature more tolerance than older societies. Many people, undoubtedly including most sociologists, regard greater tolerance as a good thing, but others regard it as a bad thing because they favor traditional beliefs and behaviors.
- Beyond these abstract concepts of social bonding, sense of community, and tolerance, modern societies are certainly a force for both good and bad in other ways.
- They have produced scientific discoveries that have saved lives, extended life spans, and made human existence much easier than imaginable in the distant past and even in the recent past. But they have also polluted the environment, engaged in wars that have killed tens of millions, and built up nuclear arsenals that, even with the end of the Cold War, still threaten the planet.
- Modernization, then, is a double-edged sword. It has given us benefits too numerous to count, but it also has made human existence very precarious.

- Changes in the natural environment can also lead to changes in a society itself. We see the clearest evidence of this when a major hurricane, an earthquake, or another natural disaster strikes. Three recent disasters illustrate this phenomenon. In April 2010, an oil rig operated by BP, an international oil and energy company, exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, creating what many observers called the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history; its effects on the ocean, marine animals, and the economies of states and cities affected by the oil spill will be felt for decades to come.
- The effects of these natural disasters on the economy and society of each of these two countries will certainly also be felt for many years to come.
- Slower changes in the environment can also have a large social impact. As noted earlier, one of the negative effects of industrialization has been the increase in pollution of our air, water, and ground.
- Climate change, a larger environmental problem, has also been relatively slow in arriving but threatens the whole planet in ways that climate change researchers have already documented and will no doubt be examining for the rest of our lifetimes and beyond

The natural and physical environment is something that geologists, meteorologists, oceanographers, and other scientists should be studying, not sociologists. Yet the environment is very much a sociological topic for at least five reasons.

1. First, our worst environmental problems are the result of human activity, and this activity, like many human behaviors, is a proper topic for sociological study.
2. Second, environmental problems have a significant impact on people, as do the many other social problems that sociologists study.
3. Third, solutions to our environmental problems require changes in economic and environmental policies, and the potential impact of these changes depends heavily on social and political factors.

4.Fourth, many environmental problems reflect and illustrate social inequality based on social class and on race and ethnicity: as with many issues in our society, the poor and people of color often fare worse when it comes to the environment.

5.Fifth, efforts to improve the environment, often called the environmental movement, constitute a social movement and, as such, are again worthy of sociological study.

- Environmental sociology assumes “that humans are part of the environment and that the environment and society can only be fully understood in relation to each other
- Perhaps more than anything else, environmental sociologists emphasize that environmental problems are the result of human decisions and activities that harm the environment.
- Masses of individuals acting independently of each other make decisions and engage in activities that harm the environment, as when we leave lights on, keep our homes too warm in the winter or too cool in the summer, and drive SUVs and other motor vehicles that get low gas mileage.
- Corporations, government agencies, and other organizations also make decisions and engage in activities that greatly harm the environment. Sometimes individuals and organizations know full well that their activities are harming the environment, and sometimes they just act carelessly without much thought about the possible environmental harm of their actions. Still, the environment is harmed whether or not they intend to harm it.
- Environmental problems are largely the result of human behavior and human decision making. Changes in human activity and decision making are thus necessary to improve the environment.
- Environmental inequality and environmental racism are significant issues. Within the United States and around the world, environmental problems are more often found where poor people and people of color reside.

Summary of social change:

1. Social change involves the transformation of cultural norms and values, behavior, social institutions, and social structure. As societies become more modern, they become larger, more heterogeneous, and more impersonal, and their sense of community declines. Traditions decline as well, while individual freedom of thought and behavior increases. Some sociologists view modernization positively, while others view it negatively.
2. A functionalist understanding of social change emphasizes that it is both natural and inevitable. Talcott Parsons's equilibrium model recognized that gradual change is desirable and ordinarily stems from such things as population growth and technological advances, but that any sudden social change disrupts society's equilibrium. Such social change often stems from intentional efforts by social movements to correct perceived deficiencies in the social, economic, and political systems.
3. Several sources of social change exist. These include population growth and changes in population composition, changes in culture and technology, changes in the natural environment, and social and ethnic conflict.
4. Environmental sociology is the sociological study of the environment. One major emphasis of environmental sociology is that environmental problems are largely the result of human activity and human decision making.
5. A second major emphasis of environmental sociology is that environmental problems disproportionately affect low-income people and people of color. These effects are called environmental inequality and environmental racism, respectively.

Common features of social change:

➤ **Universality:**

Change is universal, an eternal and invariable law of nature. Social changes take place in all the societies of the world. Therefore, social change is universal in character.

➤ **Continuity:**

Social change is a continuous process. It does not take place at one point of time only. It takes place all the time at all the places. However, we can predict some direction of change.

➤ **Variation:**

Social change is relative in time, and according to a specific period in time, its rate may be high or low. The rate and quantum of change varies from one society to another depending upon the prevailing conditions.

➤ **Criteria of larger population:**

Only those changes are considered as social change that affects larger population. Social change is accepted as such only when the majority of individuals in a society accept it in their life, behaviour and beliefs.

➤ **Independence:**

Social change is independent of the desire and will of the people or society.

➤ **Forces:**

Social change is caused due to internal and external forces.

➤ **Planned as well unplanned:**

There was a time when changes were unplanned and un directed. But in the modern time changes can be planned to achieve the goals of the society.

➤ **Structural or functional:**

Any change in the social structure or its function is social change.

Aspects of social change:

➤ **Economic aspect:**

Economic changes include changes in industry, trade, business, commerce, agriculture and materialistic attitude.

➤ **Political aspect:**

Political changes include changes in political power and administration of the state, such as adopting the values of democracy, secularism, socialism, communism and fascism.

➤ **Religious aspect:**

In religious aspect we include those changes which affect changes in various religious institutions like Gurudwara, Temple, Church, Mosque etc. Their importance in the present age has been decreased because of modernization.

➤ **Moral aspect:**

Moral changes are the changes in moral values, ideas, beliefs, such as co-education was not thought to be good in ancient times. It is not regarded as immoral in the modern age.

➤ **Cultural aspect:**

Cultural changes are the change in the culture , values, traditions and customs such as dancing was thought to be an immoral act in the past, where as it is culturally accepted everywhere now. Similarly, actors and actresses has become a role model for the present generation where as they were not socially accepted earlier as the same.

➤ **Scientific and technological aspect:**

Scientific and technological changes are caused by scientific and technological discoveries and inventions.

Factors affecting social changes in India:

➤ **Geographical factor (Physical environment):**

Social change takes place due to physical environment or geographical factor. Floods, earthquakes, famine, epidemics, fires, excessive rains, drought hot or cold climate transform the life style of people. The changing face of the earth due to advancing deserts or due to irrigation also affects population to a great extent.

➤ **Biological factor:**

Biological factors like heredity prepare the way for social change. The biological heredity determines the general and glandular constitution of the offspring which is closely related to temperament, intelligence, physique, activity level and other potentialities of individuals. Biological factors result into better equipped or less equipped persons, strong or weak persons and several other changes in social set up.

➤ **Demographic factor:**

Population plays a vital of social change. Due to increase or decrease in population the possibility of social change is also influenced. Because of these factors change in social structure of the country is taking place at a rapid speed. Decrease or increase in the population has an immediate effect upon economic institutions and associations. The ratio of men to women in a society affects marriage, family and the condition of women in a society.

➤ **Technological and scientific factors:**

Technological and scientific inventions such as various types of machines and equipments etc. are potent factors in social change. They break regional barriers by providing easy and fast means of communication as well as of conveyance. The press, radio and aeroplane together have brought the world closer and provided for intercultural impacts. Scientific inventions in the field of medicine, public health, community organization, the means of transportation, the means of knowledge, dissemination and interaction, and physical environment are regarded as significant factors in social change.

➤ **Ideological factors:**

Social change is caused by ideological factors. Ideas rule the world. Philosophical, scientific and political ideas significantly influence social change. New scientific thoughts, new religious ideas, new philosophies revolutionize the world. Rise of Buddhism, Communism, and Fascism have magically influenced new thought and human mind and changed its attitudes and values of life.

➤ **Cultural factors:**

Human culture is a process of change. Any change in cultural order is accompanied by a corresponding change in the whole social order. Culture gives speed and direction to social change and determines the limits beyond which social changes cannot occur. Cultural factors change from generation to generation and they bring about the change in the society.

➤ **Psychological factors:**

Psychological factors are important elements in social change. Man by nature is a lover of change. He is always trying to discover new things in every sphere of his life and is always anxious for new experiences. As a result of this tendency the most traditions, customs etc. of every human society are undergoing perpetual change.

➤ **War:**

War is also a cause of social change because it influences the population, the economic situation and ratio of males to female, etc.

➤ **New opinions and thoughts:**

Another factor of social change is the appearance of new opinions and thoughts. For example changes in the attitudes towards dowry, caste system, female education, etc. have resulted in wide spread social variations and modifications. In fact, a majority of the social revolutions take place as a result of the evolution of new ways of thinking.

➤ **Voluntary acts of individuals:**

History is replete with examples where "all important social and cultural changes are brought about by men of genius." In the modern world, Lenin in Russia and Mahatma Gandhi in India, have had a profound influence, and it would be difficult to demonstrate that our world would have been different had they not lived and acted as they did.

➤ **Acceptance by high status individuals:**

Any change would become easily accepted in the society if the people who are in high position would accept the change.

➤ **Legislation:**

Legislation plays an important role in bringing about planned social change. Abolition of slavery in the U.S.A. could be affected by legislation and it brought about massive change in the social structure and systems of not only the U.S.A. But other parts of the world as well. Compulsory primary and secondary education in Western and Asian countries, legislation against practice of untouchability, raising the age of marriage by law, ensuring the property rights of women, are a few measures which have brought about radical social changes in various countries including India.

➤ **Education:**

Education is the most powerful factor of social change and it is discussed separately.

Other Factors:

➤ **Westernization:**

Westernization means blind imitation of the social ways and values prevailing in western countries. The trend towards Westernization in India can be seen in all fields—social, economic, political, cultural, religious and educational. India is following the example of the West. In the social sphere we are following the West in matters like dress, life style and town-planning etc.

➤ **Industrialization:**

India is fully resolved to bring about fast industrialization. There is increase in industrialization. Industries have taken the place of agriculture. Agriculture has itself transformed into an industry. The application of science and technology to industry has increased substantially. Chemical fertilizers, improved seeds, mechanical devices,

pesticides etc. have come into wide spread use. Thus industrialization in India is responsible for social change.

➤ **Urbanization:**

Urbanization is the result of industrialization. Moreover, the fast growth of population of India has led to fast urbanization in India. Urbanization has resulted in an increase in the number of industrial cities and mobility of villagers towards the cities.

➤ **Secularization:**

Secularization promotes change. The people of India have adopted the ideal of secularism according to which everybody is free to follow the religion of their choice. In the wider sense secularism includes compassion, tolerance, diversification, broad outlook and unorthodoxy.

➤ **Mechanicalization:**

Our way of thinking, standard of living, means of communication, transportation and production, business and industries have been influenced by machines. Mechanicalization and social changes are related to each other.

➤ **Democratization:**

India is becoming progressively democratized. In India there is universal adult franchise. Everybody above a certain age is entitled to elect his representative. Every body is equal before law and enjoys equal rights and privilege.

➤ **Monopolization:**

Selected few persons have monopolized over big business concerns because of the development of capital.

➤ **Politicalization:**

There is politicalization due to political parties, political leaders, rights and duties, and regional, national and international relations. Student unrest, teacher unrest and unrest among the masses is because of politicalization.

➤ **Capitalism:**

Large scale production, development of business, expansion of education, increase in number of specialists, scientific inventions, progress in literature, music and art are the contributions of capitalism. More capitalistic view point is the result of capitalism

➤ **Culturalization:**

The most important feature of social change is culture. In cultural sphere, change is characterized by the spread of literacy and secular education, emergence of new cultural outlook and emergence of new personality orientation, traits and characteristics revealed in greater ability to adjust to the broader social horizons.

➤ **Materialistic attitude:**

We have become materialistic. We want to enjoy all the comforts of modern life such as television, refrigerator, air conditioning, means of conveyance, etc. Materialistic attitude is conducive to change.

➤ **Indianisation:**

In the development of India society there has never been divorce from past traditions and noble values of life. A glimpse of Indianisation is observed in meditation, prayer, recitation of hymns. Many foreigners in India have stated dressing and behaving in Indian style.

➤ **Modernization:**

Modernization is a process which brings desired types of changes in material as well as non-material culture including the way of life as a whole. It brings positive changes in the social, economic, industrial, technological, cultural, moral, religious and educational structure, value orientations, motivations, achievements and aspirations. It means a value change, significant institutional modifications and improvement.

Economic Focus:

- Economic is the social science that studies the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.
- Economics focuses on the behaviour and interactions of economic agents and how economies work
- Economic analysis can be applied throughout society, in business, finance, health care, and government.
- Economic analysis is sometimes also applied to such diverse subjects as crime, education, the family, law, politics, religion, social institutions, war, science, and the environment.
- Economics has been defined as "the study of scarcity and choice" and is basically about the choices people make.
- The subjects in economic study are households, business companies, the government (the state), and foreign countries.

General economic rules:

- All people have to decide between their options.
- The cost of goods is what a person gives up for the goods.
- People choose between options based on the rewards ("incentives") or bad things ("disincentives") they expect from each option. Adding to the rewards for an option will often make more people choose it.
- Trade can make everyone better off .
- Sometimes prices do not fully show the cost or benefit to society. For example, air pollution is bad for society, and education is good for society. The government can put a tax (or do something to reduce sales) on items that are bad for society. It can also support (like giving money for) items that are good for society.
- The living standard of a country depends on the skills to produce services and goods. Productivity is the amount of the produced goods divided by total working hours.

- When there is an increase in the total money supply, or when the cost to produce things rises, prices go up. This is called inflation.

Branches of economics

The two main branches of economics are,

1. Microeconomics

Microeconomics is about smaller and more specific things such as how families and households spend their money and how businesses operate.

2. Macroeconomics.

Macroeconomics is about the economy in general. For example, macroeconomists study things that make a country's wealth go up and things that make millions of people lose their jobs.

Other branches of economics:

- Behavioral economics
- Business economics
- Constitutional economics
- Cultural economics
- Development economics
- Ecological economics
- Economic geography
- Environmental economics
- Energy economics
- Financial economics
- Industrial economics
- Information economics
- International economics
- Labor economics
- Managerial economics

- Mathematical economics or econometrics
- Resource economics
- Urban economics
- Public economics
- Descriptive, theoretical and policy economics
- Monetary economics

Types of economic system:

1. Traditional Economic System

The traditional economic system is the most traditional and ancient types of economies in the world. Vast portions of the world still function under a traditional economic system. These areas tend to be rural, second- or third-world, and closely tied to the land, usually through farming. In general, in this type of economic system, a surplus would be rare. Each member of a traditional economy has a more specific and pronounced role, and these societies tend to be very close-knit and socially satisfied. However, they do lack access to technology and advanced medicine.

2. Command Economic System

In a command economic system, a large part of the economic system is controlled by a centralized power. For example, in the USSR most decisions were made by the central government. This type of economy was the core of the communist philosophy. Since the government is such a central feature of the economy, it is often involved in everything from planning to redistributing resources. A command economy is capable of creating a healthy supply of its resources, and it rewards its people with affordable prices. This capability also means that the government usually owns all the critical industries like utilities, aviation, and rail road. In a command economy, it is theoretically possible for the government to create enough jobs and provide goods and services at an affordable rate. However, in reality, most command economies tend to focus on the most valuable resources like oil.

3. Market Economic System

In a free market economy, firms and households act in self-interest to determine how resources get allocated, what goods get produced and who buys the goods. This is opposite to how a command economy works, where the central government gets to keep the profits. There is no government intervention in a pure market economy. However, no truly free market economy exists in the world. For example, while America is a capitalist nation, our government still regulates (or attempts to control) fair trade, government programs, honest business, monopolies, etc.

In this type of economy, there is a separation of the government and the market. This separation prevents the government from becoming too powerful and keeps their interests aligned with that of the markets.

4. Mixed Economic System

A mixed economy is a combination of different types of economic systems. This economic system is a cross between a market economy and command economy. In the most common types of mixed economies, the market is more or less free of government ownership except for a few key areas like transportation or sensitive industries like defense and railroad. However, the government is also usually involved in the regulation of private businesses. The idea behind a mixed economy was to use the best of both worlds incorporate policies that are socialist and capitalist. To a certain extent, most countries have a mixed economic system. For example, India and France are mixed economies.